



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 16, 2011

Contact: Katrina Farmer
Communications Associate
603-357-0600

Big gains in voluntary land conservation thanks to ongoing local support

First national census of land trusts in five years; land trusts conserve 10 million U.S. acres

KEENE, N.H. — The first census of land trusts in five years found 10 million new acres conserved nationwide since 2005, including 348,274 acres here in New Hampshire.

The National Land Trust Census, released by the Land Trust Alliance, shows that voluntarily protected land increased 27 percent between 2005 and 2010. The Monadnock Conservancy—the land trust for southwestern New Hampshire—protected land in 21 towns around the region for a total 9,385 acres between 2005 and 2010. This is an increase of 35 percent in acres protected since the Conservancy was founded.

A total of 47 million acres—an area over twice the size of all the national parks in the contiguous United States—are now protected by land trusts. A greater percentage of the new acreage comes through state, local and regional land trusts like the Monadnock Conservancy. In New Hampshire, land trusts contributed to this success by conserving 348,274 acres between 2005 and 2010 (an increase of 37 percent in acres protected during this period). The New Hampshire rate of conservation outpaces the national rate by 10 percent.

“Residents of the Monadnock Region value land for a variety of reasons, and we are conserving it at the community level,” said Ryan Owens, Conservancy executive director. “Here and throughout New Hampshire, we are investing in our future to ensure clean water, healthy food, timber and fuelwood, and places to play for our children and for generations to come. Local support and community involvement are key to making this happen.”

At Ridgehill Farm in Swanzey, for example, dozens of youth grew up learning to mend fences, bale hay and tend livestock by helping farmer Mike Johnson. The Conservancy protected the 92.6-acre farm, one of the last in town, with a conservation easement in 2009. A community party, pig roast, and parade led by oxen Buck and Ike—Swanzey’s ambassadors of open space—celebrated the project’s completion. Funds for the easement purchase came from the Town of Swanzey and a creative wetlands mitigation payment from the development of a new high-tech manufacturer elsewhere in town.

The Conservancy also led efforts that enabled the protection of Temple Mountain, along state Route 101 between Peterborough and Temple, N.H., in 2007. The mountain is the site of one of America’s first downhill ski areas, which closed in 2001. The property includes a prominent ridgeline, a popular section of the 21-mile Wapack Trail, a cross-country ski trail network and diverse wildlife habitat.

Funding for the \$1 million acquisition came from the 2007 state capital budget proposed by Gov. Lynch and approved by the legislature (\$435,000); the Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (\$135,000); the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (\$301,367); appropriations from the towns of Temple, Peterborough, and Sharon; and private donations ranging from \$5 to \$25,000.

“Adding Temple Mountain to our state-owned lands not only provides an important new recreational opportunity for people in southern New Hampshire, but it also ensures this treasured area will be preserved for future generations to use. Our state lands are our treasures, and Temple Mountain is another jewel that will help us make sure our public lands continue to meet the demands of our population,” Gov. Lynch said in 2007. “Bringing Temple Mountain under state ownership took a coordinated local, state and federal effort. I want to thank everyone involved for helping to make this important transition possible.”

In addition to the Governor’s office, the New Hampshire Department of Resources and Economic Development, and the Conservancy, leadership for the Temple Mountain project came from U.S. Senator Judd Gregg, U.S. Congressman Paul Hodes, State Rep. Anne-Marie Irwin, State Senator Peter Bragdon, Executive Councilor Debora Pignatelli, local conservation commissions and selectboards, and the Friends of the Wapack Trail. The entire effort started with a small group of local residents called Friends of Temple Mountain, which formed shortly after the ski area closed and residential development was threatened in 2002.

Other findings of the new National Land Trust Census include:

- There are now 34 land trusts operating in New Hampshire, including 18 staffed organizations and 11 all-volunteer groups.
- New Hampshire increased their full- and part-time staff and contractors 8 percent in 5 years, for a total of 162 paid positions in 2010.
- Land trusts in New Hampshire drew upon the work of 2,895 active volunteers (an increase of 13 percent since 2005) and the contributions of 31,192 members and financial supporters.
- As a signal of the land trust community’s commitment to excellence, there are now two accredited land trusts in New Hampshire (the Conservancy in 2008 and the Ausbon Sargent Land Preservation Trust in 2009). Together, these two groups have protected 23,351 acres as of 2010.

The full census report is online at www.lta.org/census.

The Monadnock Conservancy, founded in 1989, is the only land trust dedicated exclusively to the 35 towns of the Monadnock Region in southwestern New Hampshire and the first accredited land trust in the state. Its mission is to identify, promote and actively seek protection of significant natural, aesthetic and historic resources in the area; and to monitor and enforce the protection of lands in the trust. Based in Keene, N.H., the Conservancy has protected more than 15,000 acres of forest, farmland, shoreline, wetlands, wildlife habitat and recreation trails in the region. For more information, visit www.MonadnockConservancy.org.

The Land Trust Alliance is a national conservation organization that works to save the places people love. We increase the pace of conservation, so more land and natural resources get protected. We enhance the quality of conservation, so the most important lands get protected using the best practices in the business. And we ensure the permanence of conservation by creating the laws and resources needed to defend protected land over time. The Land Trust Alliance is based in Washington, D.C. For more information, visit www.landtrustalliance.org.

###